

CHARLIE MELANCON
3RD DISTRICT, LOUISIANA

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
AND COMMERCE

COMMITTEE ON
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Congress of the United States
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October 29, 2009

Dr. Donald W. Kraemer
Deputy Director, Office of Food Safety
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition
5100 Paint Ranch Pkwy. Room 3D004
College Park, MD 20740

Dear Deputy Director Kraemer,

I would like to express serious concern with your letter to ISCC members describing changes in guidance policy on the control of *Vibrio vulnificus* in raw molluscan shellfish. While *V. vulnificus* deserves a real public health discussion, it is imperative that we consider the business and cultural impacts of the proposed change in FDA guidance regarding oyster harvests.

The effects of this mandate on the Gulf Coast oyster industry could bear significant negative consequences, and likely lead to a loss of jobs in Louisiana and our neighboring states. Further, this new policy strikes a blow to the heart of Louisiana culture. Fresh, live oysters are not only a Louisiana delicacy, they are part of our heritage and our way of life. Americans have been eating fresh, Louisiana-produced oysters for hundreds of years.

The FDA and ISCC have shared a productive relationship in determining shellfish safety procedures for the last 10 years. And as you acknowledged in your letter, the efforts of the ISCC over the past decade have been instrumental in identifying those conditions under which contamination with this pathogen constitutes a risk.

Industry representatives from around the country have taken strong steps in reducing the incidence of illness related to *V. vulnificus*, and they stand ready to continue this important work. So, I urge that you continue deliberations with those individuals that are experienced and well-versed in this issue.

I request that you or an appropriate representative of your office meet with industry representatives and members of the Louisiana delegation to further discuss the economic and cultural impacts of these proposed guidance changes. In these economic times it is

critical that we all work in concert to protect jobs and continue our work as strong stewards of public health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charlie Melancon", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Charlie Melancon
Member of Congress